

or are a direct imitation of, the Laws of Justinian; apparently the redactor of the Assises had before him the Codex and Digest as well as abridgments of Graeco-Byzantine legislation. So close are the Codes of the Emperor and the Norman King that twenty-nine at least of the Assises are little more than renderings, and sometimes word for word translations, of the Books of Justinian.

The preamble strikes the high note of sovereignty. The jurist Celsus had called the interpreters of the law priests, "since Law is the art of the good and the equitable "; on this Roger claims for the royal office also a priestly character. Yet though claiming to legislate for a kingdom, he does not wish to abolish existing laws; the laws and customs of Lombards, Greeks, Arabs, "*pro varietate populorum nostro regno subjectorum*," are to remain unbroken except where they manifestly clash with royal law. Thus a royal law was to be superimposed upon all the peoples of the kingdom wherever king and subjects were concerned; under the shadow of that, however, the various races were to live by the customs of their fathers.

The great characteristic of what follows the preamble is the high and sacred power

ascribed
to the Crown. The absolutism of a
Roman
Emperor of the sixth century is
transferred bodily
to the grandson of the poor knight of
Hauteville,
It is sacrilege to dispute the King's
judgments or
his institutions, or to question whether
he whom